

# THE LIBRARY ASSISTANT

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ASSISTANT LIBRARIANS  
(Section of the Library Association)

HON. EDITOR: FRANK M. GARDNER  
(Willesden Public Libraries)

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## EDITORIAL

THE next meeting will be held jointly with the London and Home Counties Branch of the Library Association on Wednesday, 21st March, 1934. It will take place at 6.15 p.m. in the theatre of the London School of Economics, Houghton Street, W.C.1, where Mr. B. M. Headicar, F.L.A., will describe the new library buildings and equipment of the London School of Economics. This talk will be followed by an inspection of the library. Mr. J. E. Walker, F.L.A., President of the Branch, will be in the chair.

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Members of the Council are asked to note that the next meeting will be held at Chaucer House at 5 p.m. on Wednesday, 14th March, and not on 21st March, as previously arranged. Detailed agenda, etc., will be circulated in due course.

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The second paper in the series "The Library and the community," was given at Chaucer House on 14th February, when Mr. W. E. Maskell, F.L.A., spoke on "The Library and the democrat," to a not very numerous audience. Mr. Maskell began by defining the democrat as the personification of the middle class, and proceeded to outline particular aspects of library work with that class. His survey ranged from newsrooms to no-fines systems, and covered a great deal of ground in a short time. But Mr. Maskell was most interesting when talking about the social and political outlook of the class he was dealing with, and it was round that portion of his paper that a rather turgid discussion centred. The President of the A.A.L. presided, in the absence of Mr. Gurner Jones, with her usual grace, and Mr. Austing proposed a vote of thanks with his.

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As will be seen from our correspondence columns, some of our readers apparently disapprove of our editorial last month on the *Codex Sinaiticus*. We respect their opinion, and are pleased to record it. There the matter would rest, but for the writers' obvious belief that *their* opinion is the only one which has the right to appear, and that any other opinion is unpatriotic, politically biased, and foolish. Surely THE LIBRARY ASSISTANT has the right to express opinion on any topical matter which has a bearing on library affairs? And surely it is a new point of view that an editorial paragraph in THE LIBRARY ASSISTANT must necessarily express the unanimous policy of the

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whole of the A.A.L. and the L.A. ? The paragraph in question had no political meaning whatever. Our object was solely to protest against the ballyhoo which used the name of culture to disguise an attack of collector's mania. We said that the only value of the Codex lay in its uniqueness. We still say so. We do not object to disagreement with this statement, but we do definitely resent being bullied.

We were privileged to see recently, at the Muswell Hill Branch of the Hornsey Public Libraries, another example of that pleasing co-operation between municipal departments which we have approved before. In this case the co-operation was between the Library and School of Art, and took the form of fresco decoration by the students of the school on the walls of the library. The result, so far as the scheme has progressed, is beautiful without being ostentatious, and both parties to the idea have good reason to congratulate themselves.

A supplement to "A Summary of Public Library Law," containing amendments effected by the Local Government Act of 1933, has been compiled by Mr. A. R. Hewitt, F.L.A., and published by the Association of Assistant Librarians. Owners of the original work may obtain the supplement on application to the Hon. Education Secretary at a charge of 3d. post free. The complete work, containing the supplement, is also still obtainable.

Students are reminded that the last date of entry for the April correspondence courses is 20th March. Application forms should be obtained immediately from the Hon. Secretary, as mentioned on the back cover of THE LIBRARY ASSISTANT. Full particulars of all courses were given in the January issue.

The next Library Association examinations will be held in May. Entries on the official forms must be sent to the office of the Library Association, Chaucer House, Malet Place, W.C.1, to reach the Secretary not later than 31st March, 1934. Entrance forms may be obtained upon request, but candidates must state whether they require an entrance form for Elementary, Intermediate, Final, or Language examination.

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Candidates for Library Association examinations who are also members of N.A.L.G.O. may not be aware that they are eligible for N.A.L.G.O. exhibitions, scholarships, and prizes. Eight exhibitions to the value of £20 are annually awarded on the results of the Library Association and other bodies' intermediate examinations, and 14 scholarships to the value of £30 and 14 prizes to the value of £10 are awarded annually on the results of the final examinations. Further particulars may be obtained from The General Secretary, N.A.L.G.O., 24 Abingdon Street, Westminster, London, S.W.1.

It is with regret that we record the death of Mr. J. Radcliffe, Borough Librarian of the Bethnal Green Public Library, which took place in the early hours of Tuesday, 6th February. Mr. Radcliffe was at the library on the previous Monday and was apparently quite well. He was 57 years of age, and was appointed to Bethnal Green in 1914.

He received his early training at Ashton-under-Lyne (1893-1898), served at Leyton (1898-1899), East Ham (1899-1908), and was the first Librarian of Ilford (1908-1914).

In the early days of the A.A.L. Mr. Radcliffe was for some time its Hon. Secretary.

## CO-OPERATION AGAIN

L. A. BURGESS

THE readers of THE LIBRARY ASSISTANT have recently been entertained by a gladiatorial combat in the grand style over the issue of Regional Co-operation. At the moment of writing the battle is joined; the dust is rising, and the issue is as yet uncertain. Seen from a ringside seat it would appear now, at the conclusion of the first round, that the combatants are well matched. The challenger, storming in virtuous indignation, seemed, to one reader at least, to generalize rashly from inadequate premises. His opponent, defending the latest professional orthodoxy, may perhaps be held justified in confining his tactics to defence against a spirited but unscientific attack—even to the extent of leaving himself vulnerable on the main issue of principle. The issue between these two gentlemen appears, in essence, to resolve itself into one of divergent practice in the administration of two Regional Schemes; and, in consequence, if we are to accept their testimony

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on its face value, it must be as evidence of the policy and practice of their respective Regional Schemes Committees. Of these, one apparently believes in "ground baiting" the smaller libraries with lavish services from the Regional Library itself—which services it is presumably proposed to continue only for a limited term on the present uneconomic footing. The other Committee clearly started off on a "permanent" footing by systematically discouraging abuses and by endeavouring from the outset to make the service pay for itself. Let me state at once my own preference for the latter method: all experience goes to show the hopeless ineptitude of trying to overtake and control rash, insincere, and impracticable promises. But of this more later.

In this article I wish to consider briefly a few points concerning co-operation in general, in order to see how far the practice of these early days agrees with the theory. It is fatally easy to throw one's cap in the air and cheer for Progress and Co-operation: it is, of course, equally easy and equally fatal to scoff at all new departures. What is to be deprecated in both attitudes is this same *facility* of reaction. There is a close parallel to be found in the two best-known temperamental group-reactions to the idea of the League of Nations; and, in both problems alike, it is not facile emotion, but only hard thinking and a cool detached facing of facts that can lead us anywhere.

In this spirit, I wish to call attention to a few facts, which are so obvious that most people tend to overlook them. In the first place, whether we like it or not, the National Central Library and the Regional Bureaux (like the League of Nations) are not theories but facts. The question is, not whether they should exist, but on what terms they are to continue to exist. In the second place, controversialists should never lose sight of the national field as a whole. We must try to appreciate how the N.C.L. is enabled to modify its policy of book-purchase through the short-circuiting by the Regional Schemes of requests for all but the scarcest and most expensive books; otherwise we cannot hope to evaluate fairly the work of these Bureaux in the Provinces.

Nevertheless, and despite what I have said above about "established" facts, there *is* a case against the continued existence of the whole machinery of co-operation, and it is to some extent inevitable that this case will influence this article as it has influenced my thought for some years past. To be precise, I began to have doubts when the 1927 Libraries Committee of the Board of Education published their Report, embodying half-hearted recommendations repudiating nationalization (with their weather-eye on the huge Conservative majority in Parliament), and substituting inevitably a policy of voluntary co-

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operation. Personally, I habitually distrust voluntary co-operation: it savours so strongly of Babbitry; and it is too useful a cloak for incompetence. But it must never be forgotten that it is from this soil that the whole vast luxuriant growth of co-operative systems has sprung: we co-operate voluntarily to save our skins. If we failed to do so, the entire library service would be reorganized fundamentally: and State grants-in-aid would automatically give rise to inspection and minimum standards of efficiency. There are even, I believe, wicked bolshevists who feel no decent horror at this prospect: but they need not concern us now.

A criticism applicable equally to all forms of loan-co-operation—and one never yet satisfactorily answered—is that of the menace to those qualities of location and collocation that constitute part of the definition of a reference library service. There is no doubt whatever of the danger that the convenience of one country student may involve the inconvenience of a score of students, from country and town, who visit a reference library expecting to be able to consult books recorded as in stock. Granted that the cases of abuse are still few, it is, nevertheless, imperative to take cognizance of the danger before we Americanize out of existence our fine old European traditions of scholarship, whereby a man was able to broaden his mind by working in a library instead of having set-books posted to him—to the inconvenience of more conscientious workers. Those responsible public men who repeat the incantation "To every student his book" are in grave danger of raising up a Frankenstein monster.

We have noted how the N.C.L., its outliers, and the Regional Bureaux undertake to attempt to supply everything except fiction, textbooks, and rare and valuable items (though some attempt is clearly being made to lend these last under safeguarded conditions). There is not likely to be much controversy as to the desirability of excluding fiction (or, at least, contemporary fiction) for the operations of the scheme. The issue of book-rarities is bound up on the one hand with the general question of location and collocation of books in reference collections and on the other hand with the responsibility of the archivist or "curator" (in the wide sense of the term) to posterity—a factor that receives far too little respect these days from librarians untrained in archive work. There remains the item "textbooks"; and it is upon this seemingly innocent little rock that the whole elaborate system may one day founder and sink. What is a textbook? If we define it as a book written and designed for class use or for use by students in school or college pursuing a particular course, our definition is too narrow, for we must exclude from this category (and therefore be willing on occasion to lend) such books as

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*The Cambridge modern history* or Elton's *Surveys of English literature* : such books no library ought to be deprived of even temporarily. But if we widen the definition to include every book which must be regarded by a student in school or college as essential to his work during at least one term, then our category will become extremely comprehensive and elastic, and will include, not only such books as we have enumerated above (which must by hook or by crook be provided in adequate numbers locally and for preference by the school or college requiring their extensive use), but also classics like *Pickwick papers*, *The Origin of species*, and even modern writings like Galsworthy's plays, and the war memoirs of various statesmen. Such a definition will, of course, vary at different times and in different places. At first glance, this latter fact would seem to simplify the problems of National and Regional Co-operation : a book in demand in one area could be spared from another area ; but is this true in practice ? All the types of books we have instanced are likely to be in constant, steady demand everywhere—by the general public as well as by students. Again, a book needed by a student throughout a term is wanted on a special loan, not for a week or a fortnight, but for several months ; and much bitter experience goes to indicate that the individual who has succeeded in obtaining a special loan is liable, despite fines and threats, to take up the attitude : "What I have I hold." But there is little doubt in the minds of the strongest advocate of Co-operation that the supply of textbooks, defined as widely as this, is, to say the least, highly undesirable. A local, considerable, widespread, persistent, and recurrent demand ought, by every principle of library economy, to be met locally ; and it would be a great satisfaction to me to be convinced that I am flogging a dead horse when I deprecate the habit of supplying textbooks to students within the wide limits set by this paragraph. The worst offences I believe to occur in Regions containing a university or university college. In such cases country students are liable to bombard the Regional Bureau with unreasonable requests of this nature, to the great embarrassment of the Regional Library or University town library which is already experiencing difficulty in supplying the wants of its local student-readers.

These criticisms are common to all aspects of co-operation : we will now consider the special case of the Regional Schemes : designed, be it remembered, to perform locally functions precisely similar to those of the N.C.L., save that, by the nature of the case, the requests for rare and unusual loans will tend to be forwarded to the N.C.L. and its outliers. The two main question which we must ask of the Regional Schemes are : first, are they economical ?

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and second, are they ethically justified? Of the two writers cited at the beginning of this article, one stated that (presumably in his own area—a scheme assessed, it would appear, on a low percentage of library expenditure alone) libraries paid subscriptions ranging from £1 to £5; which maximum was exceeded only in one or two cases. His opponent specifically quoted his own system to the effect that fourteen libraries were assessed at figures ranging from £10 to £30, the assessment here being based, it seems, on library income modified by population served and the actual number of books borrowed and lent regionally. Now, analysis of the latest White Paper on Public Libraries shows that the eleven urban institutions among these fourteen libraries are institutions of from 11,006 to 241,719 volumes, serving populations of from 31,680 to 283,156, on incomes ranging from £1,570 to £23,445. In such circumstances can we justify the expenditure of £10 to £30 (plus postages) for the occasional loan of out-of-print and little-used books?—for to this extent the book fund is undoubtedly depleted. The eleven large urban libraries actually, according to the latest returns, borrowed an average of 102 books apiece during one year. Considering that £10 will buy an average of over 30 new “class” books and £30 nearly as many as were borrowed, can we regard the result as economical? Add to this the undoubted fact that the amount of annual contribution tends to be in inverse ratio to the number of volumes borrowed, and the question is aggravated. Personally, I find it difficult to resist the impression that if the service is genuinely confined to loans of out-of-print and unobtainable books and to non-fiction books not required or likely to be required by local readers, then the borrowing libraries are getting a poor bargain. But are they? Apparently not in one Region, according to another writer. If we can accept his statement (and it is well documented), small libraries paying only from £1 to £5 are claiming (and apparently obtaining!) unwarrantable privileges in the shape of loans of valuable books hot from the press and textbooks in great demand by students. Here, it seems to me, is the crux of the matter. If and where such services are being rendered, the bargain is a dazzling one for the small library and the country student; but it is hopelessly one-sided, and the Regional Scheme is flourishing at the expense of the large library and its ratepayers. On the other hand, the other kind of Regional Scheme is at least paying its way; but in this case is the borrower receiving value for his money? or, indeed, is he ever likely to do so? This assumes, of course, that the borrower understands precisely the limitations of Regional Co-operation.



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We now come to the question of ethics—a very nice problem indeed ! The onus of responsibility for abuse of Regional Co-operation must be shared by the Regional Staff as well as the small librarians ; but it rests most heavily on the librarian who sanctions an unreasonable loan. It is useless to assert that it “ concerns the local rate-payers, the Committee and the librarian, *and nobody else.*” It *does* concern the whole profession ; for the future attitude of local librarians towards unreasonable requests to the Regional Bureau will depend to a very high degree upon the reception accorded to similar requests in the past. That is why it is better to start a Regional Scheme on a strict business footing rather than to begin by spoon-feeding in the hope that a special dispensation of Providence will create intelligence and public spirit where none grew before. In this sense, co-operating librarians are responsible for one another’s professional ethics ; and it is the easiest thing in the world to destroy a professional conscience by pauperization.

We may well ask ourselves what policy is open to us in future, bearing in mind that co-operation, both National and Regional, is an accomplished fact ; however much some of us may feel that the existence of the Carnegie Trust grants may have forced the pace and elaborated unnecessarily the administrative machinery. My own view is that the only policy which can possibly advance the public welfare is, in this case, one of conservatism. All parties involved must resist the greatest temptations that ever assailed honest librarians to force up loan statistics. As is normal in librarianship, it is the *easy* way to secure big issues—if you are indifferent to other considerations ; and the temptation to turn a deaf ear to local complaints in order to achieve glittering Regional results must be well-nigh insuperable ; but not quite ! We must require our Regional librarians and librarians of large public services to be stern, high-principled supermen ; men who can say, No—and say it convincingly. We also require a trifle less of the embarrassing enthusiasm of public men who promise too much—and broadcast their promises.

Now, I respectfully suggest that it constitutes one of the gravest responsibilities incurred by those who preach the gospel of co-operation, that their enthusiastic exaggerations do directly encourage laziness, incompetence, and the weakening of professional conscience in small librarians and country students. Librarians, we know, *do* continue to make unreasonable requests ; and where they are not discouraged, such requests may even tend to predominate. On the other hand, if I understand aright Mr. Pottinger and the authorities of the N.C.L., the normal method of discouragement in a well-

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conducted Bureau is to forward the requests that cannot be supplied locally to the N.C.L., which first circularizes all the outliers and finally informs the Regional Bureau, which informs the local library, which informs the reader (but now perhaps a month or more later) that his request cannot be granted. If the request were unreasonable in the first instance, I suggest it would be more humane to say so outright.

I hope to discover that this is actually done in some Regions—but I know it is not a universal practice. At least, however, we may assume that the average requests in well-conducted Bureaux will become more reasonable as time goes on. *But*—if their requests become wholly reasonable, and no fiction, no textbooks, no new or recent books wanted or likely to be wanted by local readers are *ever* supplied—can the Regional Schemes be regarded as justifying their heavy initial costs and the costs of maintenance? Do all subscribing libraries fully appreciate (despite the propaganda in the press and on the air) the exact limitations of the schemes they are financing? Also, provided that they really are conscientiously toeing the line in the demands they make, are they satisfied that the game is worth the candle? In spite of a certain scepticism, my mind is open to conviction; but I do wish that the public men who champion co-operation would sometimes refrain from announcing the arrival of the Millennium, and tell us frankly that all they really mean is that librarians are willing—as ever—to lend one another a few old books which are not in much demand locally. Or *do* they mean that?

## WHAT THE COUNTIES ARE DOING

B. OLIPH SMITH

*Gleanings, 1933*

THE gleaners follow the harvest, collecting that which has been missed by the harvesters. In that sense I am afraid that my sub-heading is not strictly accurate; my intention is to select from the harvest of reports published during last year only such items as seem to me to help to illustrate the trend of development in the county libraries of this country.

There is a good deal of quiet development going on in county systems all over the country, despite the epidemic of economitis which has afflicted us during the past year or so—the counties more than many others, since their pockets had already a somewhat thin silver lining. Startling new ventures, of course, are not to be found, partly for this reason, but chiefly because county

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libraries are growing through the period of establishment and experiment, and are now settling down to steady programmes of development along lines which the early experiments have indicated. Thus we find in the rural counties that attention is being given to the need for increased book stocks at village centres, so that adequate selection shall be possible to borrowers, while a move is being made in the direction of providing shelving where possible, although it will be many years before this is common to all village centres. Some new centres have been opened to meet increasing needs, and a few have been closed down, usually where there has been more than one in a village, but occasionally because demand has not proved great enough to be worth carrying on.

In the more urban systems developments are on the lines of branch libraries under differential rating schemes, usually with paid staff, and open either full time or part time according to local conditions. Certain counties are now laying it down as a general principle that all centres with book stocks over a certain specified figure—usually about 500—shall be provided with shelving, although in other cases this has been the practice for years. The number of centres with inadequate book stocks decreases at a pleasing rate, and the work done with individual students and organized bodies is steadily growing. There are, too, signs of a serious effort to provide borrowers with a reading service of a quality comparable with the best city libraries, and although annual reports no longer contain long lists of new centres opened, they indicate a dawning recognition that the type of reading done is of not altogether negligible importance. There is a tendency, inevitable when books are handled in bulk, as at county library headquarters, to overlook their individuality; the headquarters assistant does not generally obtain that contact with the public which is so essential if its needs are to be sympathetically considered. The growth in the number of trained branch librarians is having its effect in overcoming this tendency, and certain of the more progressive counties have introduced systems which ensure that all the technical staff at headquarters shall have a certain amount of regular experience at branches. Nevertheless, although welcoming this new appreciation of books as literature, I take no pleasure in the type of report which reads "Books asked for during the year were . . ." followed by a long list of high-brow stuff. To be honest (and, of course, they never are) this should continue "But by far the greatest demand has again been for Edgar Wallace, Ethel M. Dell, . . ." etc.

One particularly outstanding feature of the last year or two has been the large number of counties which have improved their headquarters, either by

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extensions to existing premises, or by the acquisition of new ones. Unfortunately, county libraries have always been inadequately housed, with a consequent limitation of the amount of work which can be done. This is not peculiar to counties, needless to say, but is more generally the case than in other branches of the service ; at one time there was hardly a county which had really adequate accommodation. This is now changing, and with more convenient and spacious headquarters, the work of changing book stocks at the centres will be speeded up and systematized. While it was necessary to stack books on the floors and staircases—actually the case in many instances—nothing ambitious could be attempted. With ample space, more frequent and better selected exchanges will be possible. A remarkably large percentage of last year's reports refer to this problem, speaking either of the need for, or the provision of, new facilities. Cambridgeshire, the Isle of Ely, Essex, Galway, Leicestershire, Pembrokeshire, East and West Suffolk have been fortunate enough to obtain new headquarters ; Cheshire refers to the need for new premises ; Devonshire, the death of whose librarian during the year was a real loss to county librarianship, reports that the work at headquarters has been considerably helped by the new building. In Kent, Midlothian, and East Sussex extensions have been made to the existing premises, while new headquarters are projected in Fifeshire, Herts, and Wilts. This is all very satisfying, but much still remains to be done in this direction.

The programmes of branch libraries under differential rating, on which the populous counties were embarking, have been very seriously curtailed by the refusal of the Ministry to sanction loans, but a certain amount has nevertheless been accomplished. The grants made by the Carnegie Trust have proved immensely useful under these circumstances. Devon has opened new branches at Teignmouth and Sidmouth, and one is proposed at Brixham. In Derbyshire, the Heanor Regional Library, which has proved most successful, has been followed by a similar one at Staveley, which serves twenty-nine adult centres in surrounding districts ; there are also two new part-time branches, at Alfreton and Bolsover. In Gloucestershire, Tewkesbury has agreed to a differential rate, to meet the cost of a part-time librarian. Kent has now an impressive list of five full-time branches, of which Sidcup is the largest, and Deal the newest, as well as thirteen part-time ones, four of which have paid staff. Hythe, which was in the county area, is now an independent authority, a change which was made in order that the town might accept the gift of a building ; there is a scheme of co-operation in practice which virtually nullifies

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the change. Lancashire reports new branches at Prestwich (new building) and Leyland (adapted premises). Middlesex has a new branch at Hayes, in an adapted mission hall, and a new building nearing completion at Friern Barnet, which will be open this month. And lastly, in Yorkshire the East Riding has a new branch at Filey, in the West Riding a building has been erected at Moorthorpe, the cost of which is being borne by the parishes of South Elmsall and South Kirby, over a period of four years. This brings the number of localities in this area with special facilities under differential schemes up to seventy-seven, a rather amazing figure.

Naturally, there is less of interest to report concerning evening centres, Cheshire, apparently, will now provide shelves for such centres, Lancashire does so for centres with stocks of 400, a practice which will be extended downward. Essex, one gathers, leaves it to the locality to do the best it can for itself, while Middlesex provides shelving at all except a few very small centres. Devonshire has reduced the number of centres with stocks of less than 100 from 215 to 149; this is a step in the right direction. Incidentally, the Devonshire report has a feature which always irritates me—a selection of unsolicited testimonials from local librarians: "Since trying your books I have read no others. . . ." After all, we aren't peddling soap. West Suffolk, I am delighted to note, has now no centres with less than 100 volumes. I hope, but with no great conviction, that it is not unique in this. Derbyshire, with the opening of Sandiacre, has completed the service to the populous areas; Essex opened twenty-three new centres; Gloucestershire closed twenty and opened twenty-one—evidence of a careful revision of existing facilities, necessary in many counties; Norfolk brought its total up to 370, with nineteen new centres. Most counties opened a few new centres, and many closed one or two.

A little time ago co-operation and amalgamation were very much in the air; less has been heard of this topic of late, but steady progress is being made, as small urban libraries realize how much they have to gain under either scheme. With a perverseness characteristic of our profession, small libraries, with everything to gain, are reluctant to commit themselves, while the counties, to whom co-operation usually brings no benefits, since it is not even profitable, are eager to help. In Cheshire seven independent authorities rent small collections of books; Derbyshire co-operates with four other authorities, while Pleasley has surrendered its powers to the county; Derbyshire and Notts have co-operated by holding joint exhibitions on one or two occasions. In Gloucestershire the amalgamation of Stroud with the county has proved an

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unqualified success, while Cheltenham and Gloucester Public Libraries both co-operate by allowing residents in the county area to borrow. Leicestershire co-operates with Leicester, Melton Mowbray, and Hinckley; in Orkney, the Stromness Burgh Library has amalgamated with the county; Lancashire operates eleven schemes of co-operation, while Horwich has relinquished its powers. In Warwickshire an alteration in boundaries has resulted in a unique arrangement by which Tamworth Borough Council pay half the cost of a centre operated by the county and serving a portion of the borough. The West Riding co-operates with eighteen other authorities. Finchley rents a collection of books from Middlesex, but the earlier schemes operated by this county have lapsed, as the authorities concerned have grown large enough to stand on their own feet.

Otherwise there is little to report. Issues rise steadily—Durham, Kent, Lancashire, and the West Riding have annual issues of over 2 millions, followed by Middlesex and Surrey with over a million and a half, and Derbyshire and Norfolk only a little less. Book provision varies in the most surprising fashion, ranging from 2.5 books per 100 of population in Oxfordshire, to 170 in Monaghan, 103 in Selkirk, 55 in the East Riding, the highest for their respective countries. In England only Cambridge, Hereford, Middlesex, East Sussex, and East Riding provide over 40 books per 100 of population, and the average in the more progressive counties ranges between 20 and 30. A noticeable feature is the growth in the number of books withdrawn each year. In the early days the number was naturally a very small one, and it is a healthy sign that there does not appear to be any reluctance in throwing out the dead wood. For example, Cheshire added 10,585, and withdrew 915; Derbyshire added 19,514, replaced 3,109, withdrew 4,984; Kent added 27,697, withdrew 5,820. It is evident that the counties are not confusing their functions with those of museums, as some urban libraries appear to.

Borrowers show the usual growth in number. Comparative figures here are rather illusory, since some counties include juveniles, and other do not. Again, the figures of some counties represent active borrowers, as far as can be judged, while others include all registrations since the beginning of time. For what it is worth, I will record that there are seven instances in the British Isles where over 20 per cent. of the population is registered, headed by Norfolk with 25 per cent. It is significant that the more successful systems range between 15 per cent. and 20 per cent. A steady growth in these figures may be anticipated for some years to come.

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Really, a very pleasing record of achievement, one feels, considering its incompleteness, and the lean times we have been experiencing. With improvement in conditions, and the removal of restrictions, the next year or so should see rapid strides in the development of county library systems.



## COMMON SENSE AND THE CHILDREN'S LIBRARY<sup>1</sup>

EVA DANIELS

THE title of this article is the result of reading and hearing some contemporary views on children's libraries. According to some authorities, the children's library of the future will be in the hands of a librarian who will have taken a course of special training in Child Psychology and other allied subjects.

It will be the aim of this article to show that a juvenile library can be run without all the expenditure and advertisement, etc., which follow in the wake of a special children's librarian and her schemes for attracting the juvenile public to the library.

For example, there is a tendency to spend a large amount of money on making the juvenile library the most beautiful and luxurious room in the town, sometimes to the detriment of the stock. I am wholly in favour of making the children's library as attractive as time and money will allow, but do not let us forget that, first and foremost, the stock of the library is paramount.

If there is not a good selection of the kind of books which children will read and enjoy, neither the charming room nor the motherly librarian will send up the issues permanently. The children will probably flock into the library at first for the sheer novelty of coming, but no lasting effect will be made on the issues. The point I want to emphasize is this: it is the stock of the children's library which makes it either a success or a failure.

To decide what books are suitable for the library is often a controversial matter. Like the adult public the children are passionately addicted to what is commonly called "tripe." Large portions of tripe should therefore be provided so long as the standard children's books are well represented.

Opinions differ as to the respective merits and demerits of the usual writers for children. Three of the most popular authors in my library are Crompton,

<sup>1</sup> *Delivered to the Association of Assistant Librarians (N.E. Division) at Darlington.*

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Brazil, and Westerman. Each of these authors writes pure undiluted tripe! Westerman's stories often deal with the glamorous side of the Great War, and everybody knows that Crompton is the creator of the bad boy "William."

Both of these authors are said to be harmful to boys, and some librarians exclude them from the stock. If this is followed to its logical conclusion, crime novels should be abolished in the adult library. A normal boy is no more likely to model himself on "William" through having read one of Crompton's books than a normal man or woman is likely to go and murder somebody through having read a detective novel.

The great disadvantage of supplying these books in the children's library is that the children develop an abnormal taste for them, and if there are not any on the shelves will stand around and wait till the assistant puts them up. I have seen a group of girls, each of them at least fifteen years old, stand for three-quarters of an hour near the shelf on which Angela Brazil's books are put, waiting for a good school story, while under their very noses were books like *Little women*, *Good wives*, *Jane Eyre*, *David Copperfield*, and at least a dozen other fine books. That, to me, is the tragedy of our children's libraries. If we wish to keep our borrowers we must foster this love of tripe by pandering to it.

I really do think that the modern child "does not know it is born." From my own experience I can say that while the majority of children still think it a privilege to come to the library, their number is sadly diminishing. Modern children have so many luxuries that they are beginning to think that these same luxuries are their birthright.

This being the case, a children's librarian with all the qualifications outlined previously is a white elephant which many libraries can ill afford. The work done in almost any children's library can be done efficiently, successfully, and sympathetically by a senior member of the staff who has a natural love of children, some knowledge of children's books, and the usual examinations. After all, very little "child psychology" is needed to be able to show a child a book one knows he will enjoy.

There seems to be a great deal of controversy about catalogues for children's libraries. Here again is a case for common sense. At the last L.A. Conference a children's librarian told us that she had entirely dispensed with her fiction catalogue and had not missed it. I have never heard anything more puerile.

I should not miss our juvenile catalogue if it were dispensed with, for the simple reason that all the books go through my hands, and therefore I can remember what books we have and where they are. The great disadvantage



## The Library Assistant

of this arrangement seems very obvious. Naturally no children's librarian with any experience at all would miss her catalogue, but no librarian is a permanent fixture of the place, and a catalogue would be. Should the librarian leave for some reason or another and there is no catalogue, how is her successor to manage until she has had sufficient experience to remember the stock? Of course a catalogue is necessary.

Some simplified form of dictionary catalogue should be provided, and the children should be encouraged to use it. Many libraries now include classes for school children, and the use of the catalogue is a main part of the syllabus. A good reason for teaching the children the use of the catalogue is that too much "spoon feeding" is bad for them. They should be trained to look for their own books and to appeal to the librarian only as a last resort. In my opinion modern children are not sufficiently disciplined, and while the children's library is hardly the place to rectify this fault, I do not think that, taking them generally, any of their minds will be unduly strained by consulting a simple form of dictionary catalogue.

Another point which was raised at the conference was the question of charging fines in children's libraries. I think the same fines should be charged in junior as in the adult, but enforced only at the discretion of the children's librarian. I don't think it requires a great deal of intelligence to judge when a child is sincere when he says he cannot get a fine. It is advisable to err on the side of leniency, because after all it has become a commonplace that when it is a choice between borrower and fine the borrower must almost always be kept.

While I am on the subject of fines I do think it essential that fines should be charged when books are returned in a bad condition. At first there will be rather a number of very small fines because new books are returned with dirty marks on their covers, etc., but gradually, as the idea sinks into the minds of the local children, it will be found that the fines diminish very quickly and the books are kept in better condition. As they take books out children will automatically look to see if there are any marks, etc., for which they might be blamed. As a result of this the general appearance of the stock will improve and the books will last much longer.

There is a problem which has worried me for a long time, and I will be grateful to know how it can be solved. I know definitely that a number of children take out really good books and do not read them. The novelty of coming to the library seems to appeal to them more than reading the books.

## The Library Assistant

I believe that some librarians do not allow the children to bring back their books until a reasonable period has elapsed, but surely this will be bad for the children who are quick readers. I suppose one has to endure the existing state of things until the children in question realize that the books should only be returned when they are read.

I have, in this short article, confined myself entirely to the practical side of children's work.

If I have seemed to belittle the children's librarian of the future, it is because I sincerely feel that she is quite unnecessary. It is my rooted opinion that, while work in a children's library is exceptionally interesting, on the whole it is also exceptionally simple.



## THE DIVISIONS

### NORTH-WESTERN DIVISION

THE Annual Meeting of the Division was held in Liverpool on Wednesday, 17th January, 1934.

During the afternoon a visit was paid to the Walker Art Gallery (by kind permission of Mr. F. Lambert, Director). Under the kindly guidance of Mr. Lambert, we were conducted round the new extension, which was opened last year.

Tea was provided at Messrs. Rushworth's Café, by kind invitation of the Liverpool and District Branch. After tea a pleasant half-hour was spent inspecting Messrs. Rushworth's collection of antique musical instruments.

The Annual Business meeting was held in the Reference Library (by kind permission of J. F. Smith, Esq., Chief Librarian). The President (Mr. J. A. Cartledge) was in the chair. The Annual Reports of the Hon. Secretary and Hon. Treasurer were read and adopted, and the following Officers and Council were elected: *President*: Mr. B. A. Hopson, Liverpool. *Hon. Secretary*: Mr. R. Howarth, Warrington. *Hon. Treasurer*: Mr. H. Hamer, Bolton. *Council*. *Liverpool District*: Misses Fernie, Hodson, Roberts, Rothwell, Stubbs, Messrs. Haugh, Headon, Hopson, Irving. *Bolton District*: Misses Pashley and Wigley, Messrs. Axon, Dow, Fostall, Fry, Horrocks, Hammond, Thompson.

The new President (Mr. Hopson) read an unusually vigorous Presidential address. He spoke of the last generation of librarians and their great work

## The Library Assistant

under very difficult conditions. Referring to the present day, he said all the work done by the L.A. would be of no value unless the public were educated to think that librarianship is important, not only to the librarian, but also to themselves. The public were not interested in technical details; they wanted service. We should prove to them by our work that they have well-read, well-educated, willing, and intelligent people who can and will with pleasure answer any question brought to them.

Why do the public think so little of our profession? It is because we are cheap. The L.A. has not justified its existence in the matter of adequate salaries. It should make strong protest where insufficient salaries are offered, and invite the assistance of N.A.L.G.O., instead of merely making comments in its own official journal.

Another suggestion is that Chiefs should do more to raise the status of those under them. Too many take the attitude "I would like to, but the Committee wouldn't think of it." It is their duty to make the Committee think about it.

In passing, he twitted the L.A. on its keenness in making candidates pay the postage for the results of examinations, and for admission cards.

He urged all members to give strong support to the Association, and to watch carefully their own interests, that they be not sacrificed on the altar of university qualifications.

### YORKSHIRE DIVISION

The Annual Meeting of the Division was held at Hull on 31st January. It was well attended, about a hundred members assembling at the Central Public Library, where Mr. W. H. Bagguley, F.L.A., Chief Librarian, extended a welcome, and conducted the party round the various departments of the Central premises. After viewing the Central Library a visit was paid to the Ferens Art Gallery to see the exhibition of Brangwyn's works. This was an exceptionally fine exhibition, and it seemed a pity that only half an hour elapsed before we were hurried along to the Guildhall. At the Guildhall we were shown the collection of ancient charters and documents preserved by the Corporation and afterwards were entertained to tea by the Lord Mayor, Alderman A. Shepherd.

In welcoming the members the Lord Mayor paid tribute to the value of the work done by the Hull Public Libraries and by the library movement generally. Councillor Harrison, the Chairman of the Hull Public Libraries,

## The Library Assistant

also joined in the welcome. Replies on behalf of the Division were made by the President, Mr. S. A. Firth, Mr. W. Procter (Leeds), Mr. J. Cranshaw (Sheffield), and Mr. G. R. Micklewright (Chesterfield).

Next followed the Annual Business Meeting. The officers and committee for the ensuing year were announced as follows: *President*: Mr. H. W. Marr (Sheffield). *Vice-Presidents*: Miss E. F. Wragg (West Riding), F. Haigh (Halifax), G. P. Jackson (Leeds), and G. W. Strother (Leeds). *Hon. Treasurer*: W. Procter (Leeds). *Hon. Secretary*: S. A. Firth. *Committee*: Miss M. Watt-Smith (Sheffield), Miss L. Wray (Leeds), Messrs. Bateson, Gillett, Sleight, White, Wisker (Leeds), Drewery (Hull), Micklewright (Chesterfield), Broadhurst, Joyce, Walker (Sheffield). *Hon. Auditors*: Messrs. Hargreaves and Trowsdale (Leeds).

New rules and orders prepared by the retiring committee were put to the meeting for approval. On the proposition of Mr. Marr, seconded by Mr. Bateson, they were approved.

After thanks had been tendered to the retiring officers and committee, the President called upon Mr. R. D. Hilton Smith, F.L.A., to deliver his address, entitled the "Opium of the west." Mr. Smith attacked the wrong uses applied to literature and scholarship. He stated that much scholarship and mental energy were dissipated in carrying specialization too far. He also broke a lance with the literature mongers—people who extracted all the vitality and sap from literature by splitting it up and subjecting it to a process of classification. Among the things for which he pleaded were honesty in criticism, more attention to borrowers' requirements and social research in regard to the borrowers at our libraries. Many members took part in the discussion which followed Mr. Smith's address, their keenness showing the appreciation with which it had been received. The members' gratitude was accorded to Mr. Smith for his able address and to Mr. Bagguley for the excellent arrangements of the day.

G. P. J.

### SOUTH WALES AND MONMOUTHSHIRE DIVISION

On 24th January the Division held its first meeting of the year at Cardiff. The programme included an afternoon visit to the library of the National Museum of Wales, where the librarian, Miss Edwards, B.A., showed and explained the system of the Departmental libraries. Of great interest to all were the metal rolling book-stacks used for storage.

## The Library Assistant

Tea was served at the Central Library. In the evening Mr. H. Farr, F.L.A., President of the Division, gave an interesting paper on "Modern public library buildings," paying particular attention to the library now erected in Manchester. The remainder of the evening was spent in lighter vein, with games and dancing.

For the March meeting, to be held in Cardiff on Wednesday, 28th March, Miss Exley, F.L.A., President of the A.A.L., has kindly consented to visit the Division and to deliver an address on the "Possibilities of progress."

### SOUTH-WESTERN DIVISION

A meeting was held at Southampton on Thursday, 30th November, when members were met by the Chief Librarian (Mr. A. H. Davis). The party first had the opportunity of viewing the Union Castle liner, *Winchester Castle*, and afterwards inspected the Southern Railway's new docks. After tea (by invitation of Mr. Davis) two papers were read by Miss K. J. Pugh, of Portsmouth, and Mr. R. Wright, of Bournemouth. Both of these dealt with librarianship as seen through the junior's eyes, and were followed by a good discussion.

The Annual Meeting was held at Gosport on 25th January. Mr. Beach, the Librarian, arranged for the members to visit the R.A.F. base, where, under the guidance of a Flight-Lieutenant, various types of machines were inspected. These proved very interesting to the party, particularly as the hangar visited contained 'planes used for naval co-operation work. Tea at the Swiss Café was followed by the Annual Meeting. The annual report revealed an increased membership and evidences of a growing interest in the Division, while the Treasurer's statement showed a satisfactory financial position. The following officers were elected for the coming year: *President*: Mr. James Hutt, M.A., F.L.A. *Chairman*: Miss K. R. Bennett, A.L.A. *Hon. Secretary*: Mr. H. Sargeant. *Hon. Treasurer*: Mr. H. K. Bristow. *Auditor*: Miss M. Dingle. The Committee consists of the above officers and Miss A. Matthews, Miss V. Huxley, Miss E. C. Cluett, Mr. L. H. Beach, Mr. H. Johnstone, and Mr. G. E. White. Two local representatives have still to be elected. Votes of thanks were passed to the retiring President and Chairman, Mr. F. W. C. Pepper, F.L.A., and Mr. T. C. Boulter. A provisional programme for the year was arranged.

## The Library Assistant CORRESPONDENCE

THE PUBLIC LIBRARY,  
TEDDINGTON.

4th February, 1934.

THE EDITOR,  
THE LIBRARY ASSISTANT.

DEAR SIR,—

Space and time have rather constrained Verdant and Mr. Callander. Miss Verdant, in the name of most women (surely I am right in saying "Miss Verdant" and "most women"?), has had a fair and conclusive answer from Mr. Callander, in the name of most men. But one feels that the correspondence might be continued indefinitely, for are not Verdant and Mr. Callander eternal, symbols of feminine and masculine modes that are mutually ineducable? It is easy to say that Verdant—whom I am supposing to be a mature person—might be improved by a little training in abstractions and that her intuitive faculty is null, but the philosopher and poet in Mr. Callander is not thereby flattered, and to say "might be" is an illogical growl at Miss Verdant for not arguing like a man. You see, I respect Miss Verdant—keeping her a pole's-length away, and accept her for what she is. So, probably, does Mr. Callander, but when he wrote his admirable letter he was using masculine weapons which to women are not only unusable but harmless.

The truth is, of course, that Mr. Nichols and Miss Verdant are one and the same person—that is, they are presenting the case against war in the same way: he in a book for the vast public untouched by Sir Norman Angell, Logic, and Communism, and she by the implications of her letter. I believe that the weakness of the emotional way is that it is liable to be upset by a fortnight's campaign in the press, for emotionalism is unstable and is prone to reaction; and the weakness of the logical way is that it obviously does not touch the heart of the emotionalists—their vulnerable spot. (There is another way, it is true: the appeal to the breaking-point, but that is bloody and destructive, and if every few generations have to learn it how, in a million years, are we to deal with the fighting-instinct?). But the feminine-Verdant-Nichols way is a necessary contribution, and *must* be treated with kindness and—education, in its own direction, to a common ground. From several friendships I know that this amazing territory can be reached, but I suggest that it cannot be imagined and must be experienced.

About gardens, by the way. Risky things, gardens. And, really, the only

## The Library Assistant

effective way to write about them (and dream-children, and lots of other things that become fatuous with print and talk) is to use a restraint that says, "A garden is a place to be quiet in, and, when you are out of it, to be quiet about." Miss Verdant must be a delightful person to know.

Yours faithfully,

DONALD MILLER.

SHOREDITCH CENTRAL LIBRARY,

PITFIELD STREET, N.I.

2nd February, 1934.

THE HON. EDITOR,

THE LIBRARY ASSISTANT.

SIR,—

What authority have you for stating, in your editorial of this month's ASSISTANT, *re* the *Codex Sinaiticus*, that "most librarians will . . . have condemned the purchase as one of those peculiarly foolish actions to which this Government seems prone"?

You state that "the only value of the *Codex* lies in its uniqueness." Have you forgotten, or perhaps you never realized, that you would not be in a free country to-day, or be allowed to condemn a Government, for that matter, if our fathers had not so cherished those principles which are so wonderfully set forth in this original document? These principles, and this freedom we enjoy to-day, are taken so much for granted that we forget where they come from.

Have you never, sir, had any desire to possess a first edition of your favourite author? The *Codex* is the first edition of that great and holy Manual of our faith, which, though at a discount to-day, is yet, at heart, the nation's favourite Book. And it must continue to be so if all those high ideals we cherish are to bear fruit.

And, also, was not this priceless treasure in grave danger of being thrown on the dust-heap? It surprised me to learn that a country which has burnt all its Bibles and has no more churches, as such, should have even troubled to set so high a value on this manuscript. It surprised me more to learn that, being in Russia, it had not already found its way to the bonfire.

Is it not fitting, sir, that *this* country should find a place for *our* Bible?

## The Library Assistant

If we had not, it would probably have gone across the Atlantic for double the sum. But perhaps you do not mind if all the world's treasures find their way over there.

No, sir, there are more than a few people who do "care about" this "old manuscript." No money has ever been better spent by a Government.

Yours, etc.,

W. H. C. MORETON.

*(This letter has been abridged.)*

PUBLIC LIBRARY, ART GALLERY, AND MUSEUM,  
CHELTENHAM.

5th February, 1934.

HON. EDITOR,  
THE LIBRARY ASSISTANT.

DEAR SIR,—

I wish to express my most earnest protest against the tone of an editorial paragraph in this month's LIBRARY ASSISTANT, in which the acquisition of the *Codex Sinaiticus* for the British Museum is characterized as "a peculiarly foolish action." Such an opinion publicly expressed by a journal supposed to represent a section of the Library Association is, in my opinion, most unfortunate.

Yours faithfully,

D. W. HERDMAN,  
*Librarian and Curator.*

THE ROYAL EMPIRE SOCIETY,  
NORTHUMBERLAND AVENUE,  
LONDON, W.C.2.

5th February, 1934.

THE EDITOR,  
THE LIBRARY ASSISTANT.

DEAR SIR,—

I do not know who is responsible for the editorial note regarding the *Codex Sinaiticus* in this month's LIBRARY ASSISTANT, but it appears to me to be



## The Library Assistant

one that most librarians will regard with anything but approval. Apart from the peculiarly ill-informed statement regarding the value of the *Codex* for the purpose of biblical research, the note contains a specially ill-timed reference to the present Government. It is surely improper for an organ representing what is supposed to be professional opinion, to add to what can only be regarded as a foolish and hasty statement an attack upon the Government of the day. I for one must protest most strongly against THE LIBRARY ASSISTANT being used for such a purpose.

Sincerely yours,

EVANS LEWIN,

*Librarian.*

## Applications

are invited from suitably qualified members of the Library Association who would like their names to be considered by the Education Committee of the A.A.L. Section for enrolment on the PANEL OF TUTORS for the Correspondence Courses held in connection with the L.A. Examinations. Applications should reach the undersigned not later than 7th March, 1934, and should state full name, private and library address, age, length of library service, present appointment, general and library educational certificates held, previous experience of teaching, and other relevant particulars, including the subject the applicant desires to teach. Full particulars concerning the nature of the instruction required may be obtained from the undersigned on receipt of a stamped, addressed envelope. Inclusion on the panel of tutors will not be a guarantee of immediate allocation of students to any particular tutor.

S. W. MARTIN,  
HON. EDUCATION SECRETARY,  
CARNEGIE LIBRARY,  
HERNE HILL ROAD,  
LONDON, S.E.24

## MIDDLESEX EDUCATION COMMITTEE COUNTY LIBRARIES

### ASSISTANT-IN-CHARGE (MALE)

Applications are invited for the post of assistant-in-charge of a branch library; salary £150, rising to £230 by annual increments of £20, subject to satisfactory service. Experience in lending and reference departments essential.

The person appointed will be required to contribute to the Superannuation Fund.

Applications, stating age, experience, and qualifications, with copies of not more than three recent testimonials, must be received by R. WRIGHT, County Librarian, Middlesex County Libraries, Hanworth Road, Hounslow, not later than 14th March, 1934.

H. M. WALTON,  
SECRETARY FOR EDUCATION.

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